



Community Connectors: the power
of connecting people

NHT Conference 2024 in St Helens

Community Connectors

2025-26 State Budget
Community Consultation
Submission 1



**Neighbourhood Houses
Tasmania**



Community Connectors: the power of connecting people.

This model will deliver a Community Connector in every House across Tasmania, working to build stronger communities.



Neighbourhood Houses
Tasmania

.....
NETWORK

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Phoenix | 23 West Moonah |
| 2 Burnie | 24 Warrane |
| 3 Ulverstone | Mornington |
| 4 Devonport | 25 Midway Point |
| 5 East Devonport | 26 Dowsing Point |
| 6 Beaconsfield | 27 Karadi |
| 7 George Town | 28 Goodwood |
| 8 Dorset | 29 Rokeby |
| 9 St Helens | 30 Clarendon Vale |
| 10 Fingal Valley | 31 Okines |
| 11 Starting Point | 32 Dunalley Tasman |
| 12 Rocherlea (NSCC) | 33 Maranoa Heights |
| 13 Mowbray (NSCC) | 34 West Winds |
| 14 Tresca | 35 Geeveston |
| 15 Deloraine | |
| 16 Rosebery | |
| 17 Zeehan | |
| 18 Derwent Valley | |
| 19 Bridgewater (JRS) | |
| 20 Gagebrook (JRS) | |
| 21 Risdon Vale | |
| 22 Bucaan | |

*excluding Dowsing Point which is funded by Australian Government



Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania acknowledges the palawa and pakana as the traditional and original custodians of lutruwita/Tasmania. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. This always has been, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Sovereignty of lutruwita/Tasmania has never been ceded.

Neighbourhood House Network: Connecting our Community

Neighbourhood Houses are unique. We are built on the simple principle:

by the community, for the community.

Our strong Network across Tasmania has a place-based community development approach. Everyone is welcome, and this makes us the heart of our Tasmanian communities, especially for those who are facing hardship or who are socially isolated.

Since 2021 Tasmania has been piloting a Community Connector program in Neighbourhood Houses, proving that when people are connected, their wellbeing improves.*

Community Connectors have the important role of connecting with people facing complex individual, family and community issues and linking them to appropriate programs, services and resources both in the community and in the service system.

There is evidence of the difference this program makes in people's lives - people finding and accessing government and other services, reaching out for support, participating in activities, accessing meals and financial advice, feeling less isolated, and improving relationships and self-sufficiency. Community Connectors respond to individual and community priorities addressing a wide range of health and wellbeing concerns including local disasters.**

**(Deloitte Access Economics, Social return on investment of the Community Connector pilot Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, 24 November 2023)*

*** (Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, Community Connector Program quarterly reports).*



NHT Conference Bunting at Fingal Valley Neighbourhood House

Commitment to expanding our Community Connectors

In the 2024 State Budget, the Tasmanian Government committed to fund:

“ongoing employment for the 11 Community Connectors and begin a staged expansion to deliver more Community Connectors each year”.

This commitment enables the Neighbourhood House Network to adopt a strong place-based model, delivering benefits to communities, and addressing health and wellbeing issues across Tasmania.

Capacity in each community will expand year by year, which also supports ongoing employment for local people across Tasmania.

Without Community Connectors, each House is currently core-funded for approximately 2 people. A person dedicated to this role also enables managers more capacity to lead the organisation and fulfill important governance and regulatory responsibilities.



Phoenix Community House: R U OK Day Celebrations

Place-based approach to expansion

To support our place-based model we propose an annual staged expansion, increasing the Community Connector role in each House by one day per week.

Our aim is to grow from the current Community Connector allocation of (less than) two days per week per House this year, to:

- **2025-26** - three days per week at \$92,516 a year per House
- **2026-27** - four days per week at \$127,055 a year per House
- **2027-28** - four days per week at \$130,866 a year per House

This includes indexation, oncosts and overheads – noting superannuation increase from 2025.

Government committed to a staged expansion from 2025 – 2028. The proposal below is in line with this place-based expansion model, addressing the need for supplementary funds in the forward estimates.

Proposed Model:

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
CC Days in each House / week	< 2 days	3 days	4 days	4 days
Total funds required	\$1,621,527	\$3,145,531*	\$4,319,863*	\$4,449,459*
The Ask	\$0	\$1,611,531**	\$2,549,863**	\$2,443,459**

*Calculated at \$29,940 (2024 figures) - the total annual cost to employ a Community Connector in a House per day (multiplied by 34 Houses across Tasmania) + agreed indexation of 3%.

**In addition to the funds already committed to in the 2024-25 State Budget

Frequently Asked Questions

Why change the model?

The current 2024-25 budget for the Community Connector Program funds approximately 1.6 days per week per House. The forward estimates include expansion of the Community Connector Program. However, by 2028 will only equate to \$59,000 per House which in real terms, including indexation, remains less than 2 days per week.

Current Model:

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Days per week in real terms	1.6 days/wk	<1.5 days/wk	<1.7 days/wk	<1.8 days/wk
Committed funding	\$1,621,527 (\$1.298M + \$323.587 supplementary funds)	\$1,534,000 (\$1.298M + \$236K)	\$1,770,000 (\$1.298M + \$472K)	\$2,006,000 (\$1.298M + \$708K)

During the pilot phase, the funding was based on a cluster model, with the equivalent of 11 FTE Connectors engaged in participating Houses. This approach was not supported by evaluation or the Network due to its complexity and inequity across Houses.

The new agreed model from October 2024 is to fund all the Houses equally across the Network. In the new model funding allocation is divided by the number of participating Houses.

The goal is to adequately resource each House so that Connectors can strategically respond to needs, and identify creative community solutions, whilst also advocating for, and providing important information.

Why are Community Connectors needed?

Data and lived experience accounts show the distress and complexity facing many Tasmanians - especially those on low incomes and who experience discrimination, stigma, family violence and other barriers to wellbeing – have significant levels of poor mental health, food insecurity, unaffordable housing, and difficulty accessing services, among other issues.

The Community Connector program (CC) two-year pilot saw new Community Connector roles added to Neighbourhood Houses across Tasmania. The program increased capacity to address complex issues, including social participation, isolation, health and wellbeing. The roles 'connected' people in a variety of ways.

Community Connectors provide individual support as well as coordinating activities, events and provide input more widely to the service system.

What is the impact of the Community Connectors Program?

Internal and external evaluation showed the notably positive impact the Community Connector Program has on individuals, families and communities. During the evaluative phase the activities and outcomes between 20 March 2023 and 31 October 2023 across a sample of six Community Connectors were 3,800 participants across 156 events, plus 428 occasions of individual and family support.

The Social Return on Investment review by Deloitte found for every dollar there was \$2.54 in return. This equated to \$7.1 million of social return. The estimated SROI is likely conservative given the non-quantitative benefits that were apparent but not monetisable through the SROI. The evaluation by Deloitte identified the biggest barrier for the Community Connector Program, to achieve outcomes was the lack of paid hours for Connectors.

Those Houses with more Community Connector time showed greater evidence of impact. With adequate funding, Community Connectors can provide a consistent and available presence which influences long term engagement and outcomes. The ongoing success of Community Connectors requires future investment to maintain and expand the program.

Data sources include research, consultation and reports from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Tasmanian Council of Social Services, Tasmanian Population Health Survey, Mental Health Council of Tasmania and University of Tasmania.



Case study: Cooking skills

A Community Connector identified that while the Neighbourhood House provided frozen meals to the community in an esky at the front of the House for people to collect if needed, this process missed opportunities to build the capacity of individuals to support themselves on an ongoing basis. In response the Community Connector set up a free cooking program for men with a focus on budget cooking, using fresh produce supplied at the House.

Across the first three months of the classes more than 200 meals were prepared and taken home by participants, building the capacity of individuals to make cheap and nutritious meals, as well as providing opportunities for social inclusion and comradery.

With men being a traditionally harder to engage segment of the community for this Neighbourhood House, the program has allowed the Community Connector to engage and understand these people's needs. Over time this allows the House to assist these men in ways other than food:

"Most of the male participants who now attend the program are assisted with ongoing needs via the CC. This has included job seeking support, financial direction, health navigating of the sector, and housing assistance."

As a result of the program, these men have become more active in their community and given back to the Neighbourhood House itself:

"Some of the participants that attend the program are now House volunteers. They help at events to run the BBQ and assist with bagging of fresh produce to distribute to the community. One also delivers House calendars via mailbox drop."



Case study: Service mapping and relationship building is key to the role

An individual came to a Neighbourhood House due to difficulties with living arrangements and cost of living expenses. They were "sleeping rough" and described conditions of being homeless. The person had several health issues and low confidence, creating daily challenges.

Through informal conversations that took place over several weeks, a plan was developed to help this person meet their needs. This included making the person aware of temporary accommodation options to access shelter overnight, rest and connect to support including mental health services, drug and alcohol services, doctors, and more permanent housing solutions.



Case study: Reducing the complexity of information is essential

Community Connectors play an important role in linking people into the broader social support network. A common issue is that while there are supports available, many people are unaware that they exist or how to access them. One example is a person presenting at a Neighbourhood House facing a large power debt:

"The individual was unaware of the available support programs, helplines, or resources that could help them manage their debt and alleviate financial stress. Helping to simplify information about assistance programs that is easily accessible and easy to understand has been crucial in this instance."

The Community Connector referred the person to a financial counsellor to assess their specific financial situation, and provided personalised advice on managing debt, creating budgets, and developing repayment plans. The individual also accessed flexible payment arrangements with their energy provider. This helped reduce the immediate financial burden and avoid a potential disconnection.

This type of assistance is reportedly typical for Community Connectors. By being aware of and understanding the common challenges faced by specific areas, Neighbourhood Houses can better tailor their programs and services to address these needs effectively. This allows Community Connectors to build resources and relationships that enable common issues to be dealt with more effectively and identify gaps in the service system.



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Tasmania

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